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THE UNFRIENDLY CORCYRAEANS*

The prominence of the island city of Corcyra in Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War presents a puzzle. It appears in the opening of the work in a conflict with its mother city Corinth (1.24–31), after which representatives of both Corinth and Corcyra deliver speeches at Athens (1.32–44). Further conflict between the two cities follows, with Athens supporting Corcyra (1.45–55). Later on, Thucydides depicts two unusually graphic episodes of *stasis* at Corcyra (3.70–85, 4.46–8). This prominence is surprising, given that the historian himself explicitly states that the initial set of events involving the island does not in fact represent the beginning of the war (1.66.1), and that the Corcyrean *stasis* is not the first in the war, and that, as has been often observed, it is not even particularly remarkable or influential in it.[1] In what follows, I seek to clarify Thucydides' use of the island first by exploring ancient views of Corcyra's 'predecessor', Homer's Phaeacia, and by arguing that perceptions of the mythical place mirror and reinforce beliefs about its successor Corcyra. An interpretation of Phaeacia as a representative of excess luxury, weakness and friendlessness requires an aggressive reading of Homer. As Rose and others have made clear, however, this position is defensible even if not all readers may choose to accede to it. A significant strand of ancient opinion seems to have adopted a similar attitude as well, perhaps projecting a fifth-century prejudice identified by Rusten[2] back onto Corcyra's Homeric forerunner. In the second part of this paper, I argue that this background influences Thucydides' presentation of Corcyra, and that the historian emphasizes the story of the island in order to illustrate a pattern of extravagant wealth followed by civic collapse that would have been readily

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[1] Many critics, beginning with Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Thuc*. 10), have noted that Corcyra is not the obvious setting for a *stasis* narrative. This was not the first *stasis* to occur in the war; indeed, the clash at Corcyra is set off by a long-running *stasis* in the Corcyraean colony of Epidamnus (Thuc. 1.24.4. See e.g. H.D.F. Kitto, *Poiesis* [Berkeley, 1966], 279; J. Price, *Thucydides and Internal War* [Cambridge, 2001], 9 n. 4 and 276). Thucydides' awkward phrasing to describe Corcyra's *stasis*, ἐν τοῖς πρώτη ἐγένετο (3.82.1), which scholars struggle to translate in light of the facts related (e.g. Smyth 1089, A.W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* [Oxford, 1956^2], 372, Price [this note], 9 n. 4 and M. Cogan, 'Mytilene, Plataea, and Corcyra: ideology and policy in Thucydides, Book Three,' *Phoenix* 35 [1981], 1–21, at 1 n. 1), seems to acknowledge this fact. Corcyra also did not experience the worst *stasis* in the war, since Thucydides explicitly tells the reader that such *staseis* became more violent over time (3.82.3) at the same time that he notes that Corcyra was an early instance (e.g. S. Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides* [Oxford, 1991], 479). Nor did the *stasis* at Corcyra influence the larger course of the war to any great extent (e.g. Gomme [this note], 385).

[2] J.S. Rusten, 'Four ways to hate Corcyra', in G. Rechenauer and V. Pothou (edd.), *Thucydides: A Violent Teacher?* (Göttingen, 2011), 99–113 demonstrates that the ancient world seems bent on hating Corcyra, showing that a variety of ancient authors interpret events involving the island in aggressively negative ways, much as others do with Phaeacia.

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recognizable to an ancient audience. The fact that Thucydides' Corcyra-story traces all the stages of this process, from a nod to Homeric opulence through pre-war selfishness to wartime collapse, effectively explains his conspicuous use of the city.

PHAEACIA AFTER HOMER

Ancient authors who discuss Corcyra often observe that the same island was once Homer's Phaeacia (for example, Hermippus, fr. 63.10–11 K.–A. and Hellanicus, *FGrHist* 4 F 77).[3] Even Thucydides breaks with his normal avoidance of mythological topics outside of the Archaeology to note the supposed relationship (1.25.4).[4] The regularity of these comments suggests that Corcyra's Homeric 'history' was not considered mere geographic trivia but a meaningful key to making sense of the island's character in contemporary times as well.[5] The idea that the nature of long-gone inhabitants of a place might be relevant to that of its current residents would not surprise ancient observers familiar with theories espoused in, for example, the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places* (1, 16, 23–4), which argues for geography as a key determinant of national character. In another famous example, Herodotus concludes his work with Cyrus' statement that soft lands produce soft men (9.122.3).[6] Such ideas are particularly significant for Phaeacia and Corcyra, because they tend to focus on the dangers excessively rich lands pose to national character,[7] and Phaeacia and Corcyra are often treated as examples of unusual wealth in their respective eras. Adherents to this understanding of humanity might think it only natural for the Corcyraeans and the Phaeacians to be fundamentally alike, given that they inhabit the 'same' island.[8]

The earliest evidence suggests that this identification was sometimes seen as unflattering, that Homeric Phaeacia itself could be read in a sinister light, and that such an analysis would have been familiar to an ancient audience. While most of Homer's story of the place is at least superficially blissful, its ending is not, as it depicts the inhabitants of Phaeacia trembling under Poseidon's curse, but never reveals what the

[3] Later examples include Apollodorus (1.9), Strabo (6.269), Pausanias (2.5.2) and the Homeric scholia (e.g. Σ^{E} *Od*. 5.34, Σ^{B} 7.79, 13.130). As with other features of Phaeacia, the identification of Phaeacia and Corcyra appears to have been a matter of debate, and was denied by some (e.g. Σ^{e} *Od*. 5.35, Σ^{PT} *Od*. 6.204).

[4] C.J. Mackie, 'Homer and Thucydides: Corcyra and Sicily', *CQ* 46 (1996), 103–13, at 104: 'folktale references like this are few and far between in the *History*, and their inclusion … tends to be directly linked to the narrative.'

[5] J. Marks, *Zeus in the* Odyssey (Cambridge, MA, 2008), 58–9 argues that tension between Corcyra and Corinth may have caused Corcyra to embrace an alternative Phaeacian identity ('Thus the Phaiakes may have formed part of an ongoing discourse about Corcyraean identity that developed soon after the foundation of their *polis*, probably in the late eighth century.').

[6] M.A. Flower and J. Marincola (edd.), *Herodotus: Histories Book 9* (Cambridge, 2002), 314 describe this sentiment as 'common in H. and in the Greek thought of his time'.

[7] R. Bernhardt, *Luxuskritik und Aufwandsbeschränkungen in der griechischen Welt* (Eurasburg, 2003), 191 discusses excessively fruitful lands in general. P.B. Schmidt, *Studien zu griechischen Ktisissagen* (Fribourg, 1948), 188 points to Pl. *Leg*. 704–5 and 919b for the dangers of excessively fruitful lands and the luxurious lifestyle they produce; for another example of the dangers of wealth, see Thgn. 605. Amphis, fr. 39 K.–A. connects selfish behaviour at feasts to cowardice in battle.

[8] For Corcyra as Phaeacia, see U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Ilias und Homer* (Berlin, 1916), 501–5 and Marks (n. 5), 57. At least in the time of Eustathius, physical features of Corcyra were taken to correspond to Homer's description of Phaeacia (J.G. Howie, 'The Phaeacians in the *Odyssey*: fable and territorial claim', *Shadow* 6 [1989], 25–34 = reprinted in J.G. Howie, *Exemplum and Myth, Criticism and Creation* [Prenton, England, 2012], 90–101, at 99–100).

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outcome will be (*Od*. 13.185–7).[9] This single indisputably foreboding moment in the lengthy Phaeacian story is the one that captured the attention of the comic poet Hermippus (*fl*. 430s–420s B.C.E.), who assigns the impending punishment to the Corcyraeans in a fragment consisting mostly of a list of luxury goods imported by sea that parodies Homeric language and style throughout (fr. 63.10–11 K.–A.):[10]

> καὶ Κερκυραίους ὁ Ποσειδῶν ἐξολέσειεν
> ναυσὶν ἐπὶ γλαφυραῖς, ὁτιὴ δίχα θυμὸν ἔχουσιν.
>
> And let Poseidon destroy the Corcyraeans
> in their hollow ships, since they are divided in spirit.[11]

This joke, hinging on the relationship between Phaeacia and Corcyra and using Homeric language to describe Corcyra's contemporary fleet,[12] suggests that the audience would be expected to know of the 'Phaeacian' ancestry of the place. The general content of the list, which praises imported goods from ivory (15) to salt fish (5), associates the island with sea traffic, and in Thucydides as well the Corcyraean fleet is the concrete exhibition of their ties to the Phaeacians with their magical ships.[13] The reason for which Hermippus curses the islanders, their 'division in spirit', may refer to either Corcyra's internal troubles or its supposedly aloof and even treasonous attitude toward the rest of Greece discussed below, but in any case suggests a deficiency of normal social loyalties.[14] In just a few lines, the fragment thus reminds the reader that the Corcyraeans possess the Phaeacians' nautical nature as well as their island. It further ties them to Homer's narrative by discussing them in 'epic' style; indicates that at least Hermippus and probably the gods as well curse them; places the reference to them within a catalogue of luxury imports that may hint at wealth as well as at seamanship; and states that they are somehow divided or disloyal in nature. Thucydides' treatment plays on all these themes as well, and, unlike Homer or Hermippus, the historian in fact shows what he implies is the ruin of the island, the doom of which had been hanging over it for centuries, albeit through human depravity rather than through divine curse.

Like Hermippus, Herodotus treats Corcyra as fundamentally 'divided', in this case from other Greeks and its own relatives. At least as Herodotus would have it, the Corcyreans agreed to send a fleet to assist the other Greeks in the Persian War, but

[9] Most editions have Zeus respond to Poseidon's threat to bury the city in a mountain by agreeing to it. Aristarchus, however, emended the text to have Zeus forbid the plan (Σ^{H} *Od*. 13.152 or 13.158, reading μηδέ σφιν instead of μέγα δέ σφιν). Marks (n. 5), 59 argues that performers may have adjusted the song to fit their audience's loyalties.

[10] See S.D. Olson, *Broken Laughter* (Oxford, 2007), 158–63 on this fragment.

[11] Cf. *Il*. 20.32 δίχα θυμὸν ἔχοντες (Olson [n. 10], 161). Thucydides describes the natural division between Ionians and Dorians as δίχα πέφυκε (4.61.3). The phrase δίχα θυμόν and its variants appear to reflect division on a variety of levels: see also *Od*. 16.73, 19.524, Thgn. 909 (a divided heart within an individual); Hes. *Op*. 13 (the fundamental distinction between the two types of Eris); Ar. fr. 473 (setting aside one's own feelings).

[12] The word γλαφυρός usually appears in epic and lyric and is one of Homer's favourite adjectives for ships (e.g. *Od*. 3.287, 4.513, 9.99, 10.23, 12.82, 13.71, 15.456).

[13] Shipping in itself could be seen as suspect. When a new colony is imagined in Plato, the Athenian warns that a state that is overly involved in sea trade is likely to become faithless within itself and friendless toward other men owing to being filled full of business and commerce, the same attributes and trajectory that Thucydides' Corcyraean narrative emphasizes (*Leg*. 705a). Cf. e.g. Hes. *Op*. 235–6, Arist. *Pol*. 1328b40.

[14] Rusten (n. 2), 106 observes that the fragment could refer to multiple historical moments.

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waited until the outcome was determined before actually joining the fight (7.168–70).[15] Herodotus even describes a never-delivered speech the Corcyraeans allegedly prepare to pledge their allegiance to Xerxes in case of his triumph (7.168), an unusual narrative choice that, whether or not such a speech ever existed, casts the Corcyraeans in as unflattering a light as possible.[16] Like Thucydides, Herodotus also comments disparagingly on the enmity between Corcyra and Corinth despite their blood relationship (3.49.1): ἀλλήλοισι διάφοροι ἐόντες ὅμαιμοι.

Fourth-century authors also discuss the nature of Phaeacia, focussing largely on its suspicious luxury and consequent isolationism. In a long fragment, Heraclides Ponticus (fr. 175 Wehrli, commenting on *Od*. 13.119) offers an explanation for Phaeacia's loneliness: quoting Nausicaa's comments on Phaeacian xenophobia (*Od*. 7.32–3), he states that 'being then such men and having such a (good) country, it is not at all strange that they are careful not to be discovered by people capable of waging war, lest they be driven from their country, and that they send strangers away from their land [for this reason], and not out of *philoxenia*'. Heraclides adds that 'their love of pleasure and luxurious lifestyle' leaves them 'untrained for war', an assessment that might describe Thucydides' wealthy but militarily incompetent Corcyraeans as well. Theopompus, meanwhile, censors the Sidonian king Strato by drawing parallels between his behaviour and that of the Phaeacians, saying that Strato spent his time as Homer's Phaeacians did, 'celebrating and drinking and listening to singers and rhapsodes' (*FGrHist* 115 F 114). Athenaeus 1.15–16 cites Dioscurides (*FGrHist* 594 F 5) and Philochorus (*FGrHist* 326 F 169a) in a discussion of luxury in Homer, and both sources use the relatively simple diet of even the famously decadent Phaeacians as evidence for Homer's advocacy of moderation. Dioscurides makes further remarks on Alcinous' τρυφερὸν … βίον and calls the Phaeacians τρυφερωτάτους ἑστιῶν.

Later Homeric commentators, presumably following arguments put forward by their Alexandrian sources, also tend to see Phaeacia as an ominous place, emphasizing the same features that earlier authors explicitly and implicitly call attention to, which map onto and perhaps stem from the fifth-century bias against Corcyra noted above. Like modern scholars, some scholia view the island as a charming paradise, while others see a dystopia.[17] The majority opinion, however, seems to be that Homer represents the Phaeacians as having been rendered effeminate by the comfortable lifestyle their island afforded, and that this combination of wealth and weakness led them to isolate themselves from the world. Among many similar examples, Σ^{QT} describes the city as τρυφερωτάτης (*Od*. 6.53), while Σ^{HPT} calls the Phaeacians ἁβροδίαιτοι (*Od*. 6.65), and Σ^{ET} and Σ^{QT} agree (*Od*. 6.244).[18] Σ^{T} is scornful about the Phaeacians' behaviour

[15] Rusten (n. 2), 108.

[16] E. Foster, *Thucydides, Pericles and Periclean Imperialism* (Cambridge, 2010), 59–60 n. 43 argues that the speech by Thucydides' Corcyraeans before the Athenians is highly reminiscent of the imagined speech by Herodotus' Corcyraeans to Xerxes, suggesting that Thucydides saw their behaviour in his war as consistent with their previous actions.

[17] For more on the scholiasts' response to the Phaeacians, see S. Reece, *The Stranger's Welcome* (Ann Arbor, 1993), 107–8. In one example of a positive reading, Plutarch calls Alcinous φιλοξενώτατον (*De Exilio* 603d). For the argument that Phaeacia is indeed a friendly paradise, see e.g. Σ^{EV} *Od*. 7.32, which observes that some authorities tried to argue that Homer presents the Phaeacians as φιλοξενώτατοι, and Σ^{HQ} 8.31. Such positive readings of Phaeacia imply the existence of negative ones by entering into polemic against them.

[18] The frequent variations on ἁβρός in these discussions are particularly unflattering. Bernhardt (n. 7), 19 argues that ἁβροσύνη is a word 'das sich auf Luxus, Üppigkeit, Weichheit und Annehmlichkeit orientalischer Provenienz bezog'. E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through*

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after Odysseus' victory in the discus contest, saying that Homer hints at their unwarlike lifestyle by depicting them fleeing to luxury after a defeat (*Od*. 8.248). Σ^{T} attempts to explain the 'flashes' the Phaeacians' feet produce as they dance by suggesting that they are so tender that they are white, 'for he sets up the Phaeacians as luxurious' (*Od*. 8.265).

The weakness this life of luxury allegedly produces is routinely presented as leading directly to isolation: Σ^{EQT} declares that the Phaeacians must transport Odysseus to Ithaca while he is asleep because they do not want anyone to know exactly where to find them, as they are aware of their own weakness in war (*Od*. 7.318). At *Od*. 7.318, Σ^{EQT} also claims that the residents of Phaeacia are hostile to strangers (μισόξενοι) because they know they cannot defend themselves militarily. Another scholiast observes that the Phaeacians do not intermarry with other cities (Σ^{B} *Od*. 6.244), one of several types of Homeric exchange in which the Phaeacians cannot, or cannot fully, participate. The physical distance separating Phaeacia from the rest of humanity also provokes frequent comments from the scholiasts (for example, Σ^{EPQT} *Od*. 6.204). The ubiquity of these arguments about whether Phaeacia is a blissful paradise or a self-indulgent colony of cowards, and correspondingly whether it is hospitable or deliberately isolated, suggests that the question of whether Homer presents the island in a positive or in a negative light was considered a major interpretative issue, while the apparent engagement of earlier literature with similar issues indicates that the debate may have its roots in Thucydides' own time.

Modern scholars have discussed Phaeacia in similar ways,[19] often stressing the people's softness and inexperience in war.[20] Dickie, for example, has explored further signs of unmanliness in the incompetent athleticism of the Phaeacians, who excel only in sports unrelated to military prowess.[21] Phaeacia's marked isolation also continues to

Tragedy (Oxford, 1989), 81–3 notes that it is associated with barbarians or women, while L. Kurke, 'The politics of ἁβροσύνη in archaic Greece', *ClAnt* 11 (1992), 91–120 traces the evolution of the word from primarily positive to derogatory after the Persian Wars.

[19] G.P. Rose, 'The unfriendly Phaeacians', *TAPhA* 100 (1969), 387–406, building partly on the more limited discussion in A.D. Fraser, 'Scheria and the Phaeacians', *TAPhA* 60 (1929), 155–78, at 171, was among the first modern scholars to advocate strongly for reading Phaeacia as fundamentally troubled. Other scholarship on this question includes G.J. de Vries, 'Phaeacian manners', *Mnemosyne* 30 (1977), 113–21; M. Dickie, 'Phaeacian athletes', *PLLS* 4 (1983), 237–76; G.W. Most 'The structure and function of Odysseus' apologoi', *TAPhA* 119 (1989), 15–30, at 27–30; Reece (n. 17), 101–21; A. Karp, 'The need for boundaries: Homer's critique of the Phaeakian utopia in the *Odyssey*', *Utopian Studies* 6 (1995), 25–34, at 32; F. Ahl and H.M. Roisman, *The Odyssey Re-Formed* (Ithaca, NY, 1996), 43–91; C. Broeniman, 'Demodocus, Odysseus, and the Trojan War in *Odyssey* 8', *CW* 90 (1996), 3–13, at 7–8; Mackie (n. 4), 103–13; J. Redfield, 'The economic man', in L.E. Doherty (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Homer's* Odyssey (Oxford, 2009), 265–87, at 283–7. For a positive view of Scheria, especially as opposed to Calypso's isolated island in which action is suspended, see C.P. Segal, 'The Phaeacians and the symbolism of Odysseus' return', *Arion* 1 (1962), 17–64, at 21–2, although he concludes that the Phaeacians' lack of exposure to suffering renders them fundamentally different from Odysseus.

[20] Howie (n. 8), 92–3. For the significance of capability in war, see e.g. J. de Romilly, 'Guerre et paix entre cités', in J.-P. Vernant (ed.), *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1968), 207–20, at 208; E.A. Havelock, 'War as a way of life in classical culture', in E. Gareau (ed.), *Classical Values and the Modern World* (Ottawa, 1972), 19–78, at 75; K.J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality* (Oxford, 1974), 314; Price (n. 1), 68. See J. Moles, 'Herodotus warns the Athenians', in F. Cairns and M. Heath (edd.), *Roman Poetry and Prose, Greek Poetry, Etymology, Historiography* (Leeds, 1996), 259–84, at 265–6 for the argument that structural similarities between the *Odyssey* narrative and Herodotus' story of Solon's visit to Croesus suggest that the Lydians share the Phaeacians' softness.

[21] Dickie (n. 19), 237–40.

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unsettle readers. Rose observes that Athena describes the Phaeacians as so unfriendly and intolerant of strangers (7.32–3) that she must protect Odysseus by hiding him from their view (7.15–17).[22] Alcinous fails to raise his suppliant from the hearth immediately and must be prompted to do so (7.155–7),[23] and back on Ithaca Athena takes credit for having made Odysseus the Phaeacians' friend (13.302), suggesting that supernatural assistance was required to facilitate even the arguably hesitant reception he received from them. Just as they do not exchange women in marriage, the islanders will never receive a return on their hospitality by visiting Ithaca.[24] Indeed, they seem to prefer isolation; despite its distance from the rest of humanity, 'the city of peace is surrounded by a defensive wall not unlike the cave in which Polyphemos dwells'.[25] Social relations within Phaeacian society can also be interpreted as strained; Alcinous is unusually explicit and imperious about extracting wealth from the people in order to reinforce his relationship with Odysseus (*Od*. 13.14–15),[26] and 'extreme measures' must be taken to guard these gifts from the crew delivering him to Ithaca,[27] while Nausicaa seems to imply a rift between herself and the common people when she imagines their reaction to seeing her with Odysseus (6.272–84). The Phaeacian story is even founded on violence among relatives such as will feature in Thucydides' Corcyra-narrative: Alcinous, whose people were driven from their homes by the Cyclopes and will be cursed by Poseidon, is Polyphemus' nephew[28] and the god's grandson. 'And yet the god, who is otherwise so jealous of the welfare of his offspring, is by no means friendly towards this people. He threatens them and ultimately punishes them for their practice of indiscriminately convoying all strangers over the sea.'[29] For a reader seeking Phaeacian social problems in the text, their kin-relationship with the god serves as additional evidence, as Poseidon is particularly upset that his own people have betrayed him by ferrying Odysseus home (13.130). Even the *Odyssey* narrative can be made to fit into a theory of human nature becoming soft in soft lands; Howie notes that the only evidence of military ambition on Phaeacia, the presence of an aged woman captured in war, is a generation old, a fact that may be taken to suggest a softening over time after arrival on the magical island.[30]

Thucydides' treatment of Corcyra is thus situated within a literary and cultural context that often characterizes the island, whether it goes by the name Phaeacia or Corcyra, as wealthy and indifferent to normal social ties. I argue below that this legacy influences the historian's use of the place as well: the fact that the island already represented dangerous wealth and related social dysfunction made it an ideal setting for the *stasis* narrative, which depicts the trajectory of a selfish and generally alienated civic body.

[22] Rose (n. 19), 390–1.
[23] Rose (n. 19), 394. On the Phaeacians' questionable guest-friendship, see also Most (n. 19), 26–8.
[24] Redfield (n. 19), 277.
[25] Karp (n. 19), 32.
[26] J. Rundin, 'A politics of eating: feasting in early Greek society', *AJPh* 117 (1996), 179–215, at 192–3.
[27] Reece (n. 17), 106.
[28] Ahl and Roisman (n. 19), 103.
[29] Fraser (n. 19), 171.
[30] Howie (n. 8), 94.

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THUCYDIDES' HOMERIC CORCYRAEANS

Thucydides calls attention to Corcyra's questionable Homeric legacy before attributing to it all the characteristics of a negative reading of Phaeacia. He reminds the reader of 'the earlier inhabitation of Corcyra by the Phaeacians' (1.25.4), and reports that the Corcyraeans developed a sizeable fleet out of pride in their Homeric legacy (1.25.4). These ships, the physical manifestation of Corcyra's embrace of its Phaeacian heritage, are a prominent part of the characterization of the island in Thucydides' narrative as well as in his own remarks. They occupy a large portion of the Corcyraean speech at Athens, although they will never be correspondingly important in reality, and indeed they almost always perform remarkably badly in battle.[31] Thucydides further encourages the reader to see Corcyra in a Homeric light by describing the city and its relations in vocabulary more suited to epic poetry than to his own prose. The Corcyra narrative opens with what some have seen as an Homeric description of its daughter city Epidamnus,[32] and Thucydides reports that the Corinthians were eager to aid Epidamnus owing to the failure of the Corcyraeans to provide them with the 'customary privileges', γέρα τὰ νομιζόμενα (1.25.4), in ritual contexts. These are more Homeric than Thucydidean grounds for a struggle; Thucydides does not usually attribute conflicts to wounded pride, preferring pragmatic future-oriented motivations, such as fear (for example, 1.23.6) or greed (for example, 6.24.3). Indeed, γέρας appears elsewhere in Thucydides only once (1.13.1), in a portion of the Archaeology describing the period of hereditary kingship. The *Iliad*, on the other hand, begins with such an offence, the word γέρας appearing frequently in Book 1, most often in the description of Agamemnon's and Achilles' initial argument.[33] Vocabulary reminiscent of Homer appears again when Thucydides attributes the Corcyraeans' arrogant behaviour to their attempts to appropriate the *kleos* of the Phaeacians concerning nautical matters (1.25.4). The term *kleos* appears only twice elsewhere in Thucydides,[34] once when Thucydides describes the way in which the world will see Greece after it has become ancient history (1.10.2) and once in the Funeral Oration (2.45.2), purple passages where the poetic language is striking but unsurprising.[35] Here, however, it works with the other Homeric elements in a way that encourages the reader to consider Corcyra and its behaviour in light of its dubious legacy.

[31] This fleet, along with its past and possible future success, is a major factor in the negotiations, as the Corcyraeans return to it repeatedly (1.32.5, 1.33.2, 1.35.5, 1.36.2–3). But the Corcyraeans are neither loyal nor effective sailors. In one instance, despite Athenian advice to deploy the fleet *en masse* (3.77.1), the Corcyraeans dispatch them individually. This strategy is not seen elsewhere in Thucydides, and—unsurprisingly—proves disastrous. Later on, the Corcyraeans fight among themselves on-board rather than facing the enemy (3.77.2). Gomme (n. 1), 362 observes that there may be irony in Hermippus' description of the ships as γλαφυροῖς, which might mean 'elegant, neat, skilful', while the Corcyraean fighting style will be decidedly otherwise. Cf. Cogan (n. 1), 4: 'During the original ἐπιμαχία Corcyrean help was minimal; following the *stasis*, despite, as it were, a new debt owed Athens, Corcyrean help was, it seems, still minimal.'

[32] S. Hornblower, *Thucydides* (Baltimore, 1987), 116 argues that the phrase Ἐπίδαμνός ἐστι πόλις (1.24.1) may echo Homer. This conclusion is not accepted by all, however, and P.J. Rhodes, 'Epidamnus is a city: on not overinterpreting Thucydides', *Histos* 2 (1998), 64–71 argues that Hornblower reads too much into these words.

[33] 1.118, 1.120, 1.123, 1.133, 1.135, 1.138, 1.161, 1.163, 1.167, 1.185, 1.276, 1.356, 1.507.

[34] A.W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford, 1945[1]), 1.160 also observes that it is poetic, and Mackie (n. 4), 103 n. 3 that it reinforces the Homeric connection in the passage.

[35] For *kleos* as a Homeric concept, see e.g. G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore, 1979), 16–22.

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The days of magical gold and silver dogs roaming Phaeacia (*Od*. 7.91) may be long past, but Thucydides describes its successor's wealth with unusual insistence, placing considerably more emphasis on Corcyra's riches than he does on the resources of even the notoriously well-off Corinthians. Corinthian hostility to Corcyra is attributed to the allegation that the Corcyraeans 'were looking down on them, being, in the power of their resources, similar to the wealthiest of the Greeks' (1.25.4). When the Corinthians later deliver their speech at Athens asking the Athenians to rebuff Corcyra's proposed alliance, they connect Corcyraean wealth (1.38.5 ἐξουσίᾳ πλούτου) with their colony's allegedly hubristic behaviour,[36] and go on to describe the Corcyraeans as greedy (1.40.1 πλεονέκται). Like many observers in the case of Phaeacia, the Corinthians attribute Corcyra's isolation to its wealth, claiming that the island shuns others because it does not need outsiders and would rather keep its good fortune to itself (1.39.3). Indeed, Thucydides presents the Corcyraeans' weakness for soft treatment as a cause of the city's internal friction. Uniquely in his work, he reports that the Corinthians were very generous to 250 Corcyraean captives following the battle of Sybota,[37] 'so that they would go back and bring over Corcyra to them' (1.55.1 ἐν θεραπείᾳ εἶχον πολλῇ, ὅπως αὐτοῖς τὴν Κέρκυραν ἀναχωρήσαντες προσποιήσειαν), as most of them conveniently 'happened to be the foremost of the city in power' (1.55.1). When Thucydides returns to the Corcyraean story two books later, this hospitality seems to have established the Corcyraean oligarchic party. Again, instead of mentioning established economic or political tensions within Corcyra that might have caused them to side with Corinth, he simply notes that the captives were freed 'allegedly having paid bail of 80 talents to the *proxenoi*, but really having been persuaded to bring Corcyra over to the Corinthians' (3.70.1 πεπεισμένοι Κορινθίοις Κέρκυραν προσποιῆσαι). Pre-existing class divisions are the apparent cause of other cases of *stasis* (3.82.1), but in this instance Thucydides instead emphasizes Corinthian generosity and persuasion. In doing so, he creates a story in which Corcyraean loyalties seem to shift under the influence of θεραπεία, building on the sense that Corcyraeans can be bought by indulgence in a way that other figures in his work are not.

A related concept is Corcyra's unusual self-sufficiency, which the Corinthians also critique (1.37.3 ἡ πόλις αὐτῶν … αὐτάρκη θέσιν κειμένη). Autarky is occasionally treated in a positive manner by ancient authors,[38] but it is an ambiguous characteristic and dangerous if pursued to extremes.[39] In Thucydides, Pericles' insistence on the autarky of the Athenian state (2.36.3) and its citizenry (2.41.1) is often thought to be rebutted when the plague, a metaphor for the war, renders 'no body αὔταρκες' (51.3).[40]

[36] The unpalatable nature of the Corcyraean brand of morality is particularly clear, because most readers agree with C.W. Macleod, 'Form and meaning in the Melian Dialogue', *Historia* 23 (1974), 385–400, at 388 that the Corinthian speech seems to be grounded in justice.

[37] θεραπεία is rarely positive in Thucydides' work, e.g. 3.82.8 τὰ μὲν κοινὰ λόγῳ θεραπεύοντες.

[38] Ar. *Ach*. 33–6 has Dicaeopolis longing for his farm that produced everything. Arist. *Pol*. 1252b32–1253a1 presents a limited kind of autarky as the condition of a completely developed city-state (ἤδη πάσης ἔχουσα πέρας τῆς αὐταρκείας ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν).

[39] T.F. Scanlon, 'Echoes of Herodotus in Thucydides: self-sufficiency, admiration and law', *Historia* 43 (1994), 143–76, esp. 160. See also S. von Reden, *Exchange in Ancient Greece* (London, 1995), 135–42. Aristotle says that men must form bonds among themselves because they cannot be self-sufficient (*Eth. Eud.* 1242a διὰ γὰρ τὸ μὴ αὐταρκεῖν). See also A.W.H. Adkins, '"Friendship" and "self-sufficiency" in Homer and Aristotle', *CQ* 13 (1963), 30–45, at 44–5.

[40] C.W. Macleod, 'Thucydides and tragedy', in O. Taplin (ed.), *The Collected Essays of Colin Macleod* (Oxford, 1983), 140–58, at 151. He also observes that Thucydides engages with Herodotus 1.32.8–9, in which Solon informs Croesus that no man can be independent. The echo is

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Athens' promiscuous relations with others are in fact one of her great virtues (for example, 2.38.2). Self-sufficiency lies behind Phaeacian isolation as well, as the Phaeacian earth provides magical produce (*Od*. 7.114–32).[41] The self–sufficiency attributed to both Phaeacia and Corcyra puts them suspiciously on a par with gods or beasts,[42] contributing to the isolation from human society that observers find so troubling.

Like Homer does to Phaeacia, Thucydides gives Corcyra the paradoxical status of a city of isolated mariners.[43] The historian emphatically claims that the Corcyraeans 'were in a treaty with none of the Greeks, nor did they enrol themselves either in the treaty with the Athenians or in that with the Spartans' (1.31.2), even though evidence elsewhere indicates otherwise.[44] Thucydides reports that the Corcyreans ignore their mother city Corinth 'despite being their colonists' (1.25.3 αὐτῶν παρημέλουν ὄντες ἄποικοι), phrasing that calls attention to the Corcyraean departure from expected behaviour even more than Herodotus' similar statement does, in that the Corcyraeans thus appear to be entirely responsible for the split.[45] The Corcyraean refusal to give Corinth the customary γέρα represents a rejection of their closest social ties and a denial that the two cities are part of a single community.[46] In the Corcyraean Debate at Athens, the Corinthians repeat Thucydides' claim that their colony is ἄσπονδον (1.37.4), and they dedicate much of their speech to a discussion of Corcyra's friendlessness and unwillingness to share its resources (1.37, 39.3). Among similar claims, they argue that the Corcyraeans avoid others so as to have no witnesses of their ἀδικήματα (1.37.2). Their statement that the Athenians should not trust the Corcyraeans because the two cities have never even made a treaty to end a war (1.40.4)[47] also suggests

also discussed by J.W. Allison, 'Pericles' policy and the plague', *Historia* 32 (1983), 14–23; J.S. Rusten (ed.), *Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War Book II* (Cambridge, 1989), 159; and Scanlon (n. 39), 148.

[41] Redfield (n. 19), 275: Phaeacia's autarky is in fact one of its most troubling aspects, because in the *Odyssey* there is 'a persistent tension between the aspiration to household self-sufficiency and the recognition that security and happiness are only possible in the context of a wider community'.

[42] Xen. *Mem*. 2.1.18–34 presents self-sufficiency as a great good, but contrasts it with ἐκ τοῦ παραχρῆμα ἡδοναί (2.1.20). Arist. *Pol*. 1253a29 'For he who is not able to take part in community or is needing nothing through his self-sufficiency is no part of a city, such as either a beast or a god. For indeed the urge for such community is in everyone by nature.'

[43] Fraser's description of Phaeacia would fit both: they 'are alone and isolated, and have nothing to do with the rest of mankind. Of what service, then, are those ships that are said to visit all shores?' ([n. 19], 176).

[44] Herodotus (7.154.3) says that both Corcyra and Corinth assisted Syracuse in making peace with Hippocrates of Gela in 492 (A.J. Graham, *Colony and Mother City in Ancient Greece* [Manchester, 1964], 144). Herodotus' Samians take a great risk for the Corcyraeans (3.48.1–4). Gomme (n. 34), 183 points out that the presence of a 'considerable force' of Zacynthians as allies to Corcyra early on in its conflict with Corinth in Thucydides (1.47.2) suggests that Zacynthus 'may long have been friendly with Kerkyra'. And when the Corcyraean hostages taken in the initial encounter return home after their stay in Corinth, their fellow citizens vote 'on the one hand to be allies of the Athenians in accord with their agreement, but on the other to be friends of the Peloponnesians as they had also been before' (3.70.2).

[45] Cf. the Corinthians' statement ἄποικοι δ' ὄντες ἀφεστᾶσί τε διὰ παντός (1.38.1). Herodotus 3.49 reports that νῦν δὲ αἰεὶ ἐπείτε ἔκτισαν τὴν νῆσον εἰσὶ ἀλλήλοισι διάφοροι ἐόντες ὅμαιμοι. The Phaeacians, in fact, have a similar quarrel with their own forefather Poseidon, who complains that 'the mortals do not honour me a bit, the Phaeacians, although they are from my stock' (13.129–30 με βροτοὶ οὔ τι τίουσι, | Φαίηκες, τοί πέρ τε ἐμῆς ἔξ εἰσι γενέθλης).

[46] W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), 58: what sacrifice 'means for men is always quite clear: community, *koinonia*'.

[47] Gomme (n. 34), 174 calls this 'an illogical point'. G. Crane, 'Power, prestige, and the Corcyrean affair in Thucydides 1', *ClAnt* 11 (1992), 1–27, at 18: 'The absence of bilateral exchanges of any kind means that a state cannot be trusted.'

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extreme isolation; even such a tenuous connection as a history of resolved hostility would be preferable to the state of complete isolation that is attributed to Corcyra and that so resembles its predecessor Phaeacia.

Both speeches in the Corcyraean Debate dedicate a great deal of text to Corcyra's history of indifference to other states.[48] Even before they are reproached for their isolation, the Corcyraeans seem to consider it imperative to explain and apologize for this. They do so at great length (1.32.1–5) in a speech that has been characterized as 'flowery and superfluous, an over-extended confession of mistaken policy'.[49] Among other such statements, they note the challenge their supposedly lonely history poses for them (1.32.1): 'for those such as we are now, who have never willingly assisted their neighbours by engaging either in any great service or in an alliance that creates a debt, it is just before asking for a favour to have to show first that they ask for something expedient, or at least not dangerous, and next that they will have lasting gratitude.' They explain that 'despite being voluntary allies of no one ever in the past, we now come to ask this thing of others' (1.32.4). Despite the indications that they were not in fact completely isolated, Thucydides does not have them protest such a characterization but instead has them attribute their alleged friendlessness to an error in judgement rather than the evil it might seem to be (1.32.5). Lacking a track record of mutual assistance, the Corcyraeans dedicate another large section of their speech to discussing the resources with which they could repay the Athenians (1.33.1–4), the speech as a whole reinforcing the associations between the Corcyraeans and the wealth and the friendlessness that so resemble those of their predecessors.

AN ANCIENT PATTERN OF CORRUPTION

Wealth, dysfunctional intercity social relations and *stasis* may seem unrelated phenomena to a modern reader. In the ancient world, however, they were often linked. This pattern gives Thucydides' Corcyra-narrative its thematic unity, in that it forms a kind of natural history of a social rather than a physical disease. The indulgent appetites attributed to excessively wealthy states are often presented as a root cause of *stasis*. Heraclides Ponticus (fr. 50 Wehrli), for example, associates the fall of the Milesians to τρυφὴν βίου καὶ πολιτικὰς ἔχθρας producing *stasis*. Aristotle expounds on the risks of excess material goods for both states and individuals (*Pol*. 1323b1–15). Ephorus suggests that πλεονεξία and τρυφή cause civic unrest (*FGrHist* 70 F 149; cf. F 148), as does Strabo (10.480), and Timaeus connects τρυφή with *stasis* (*FGrHist* 566 F 50). Colonies or cities distant from mainland Greece seem to have been regarded as particularly vulnerable to character change caused by excess,[50] and Phaeacia/Corcyra not only is far from the mainland but also has a conspicuously

[48] Scholars who have studied the speeches—including G. Crane, *Thucydides and the Ancient Simplicity* (Berkeley, 1998), 108–13; A. Missiou, *The Subversive Oratory of Andokides: Politics, Ideology and Decision-Making in Democratic Athens* (Cambridge, 1992), 121–6; and T. Rood, 'Rhetoric, reciprocity and history: Thucydides' Corcyra debate', in M. Scortsis (ed.), *III International Symposium on Thucydides: The Speeches* (Athens, 2006), 65–73—have identified a lack of reciprocity as a major element in them.

[49] W.M. Calder, 'The Corcyraean-Corinthian speeches in Thucydides I', *CJ* 50 (1955), 179–80, at 179.

[50] As Schmidt (n. 7), 185–6 notes, Phylarchus (*FGrHist* 81 F 66) says that the Colophonians were

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colonial identity in both of its incarnations. Phaeacia is the first city in Greek literature to be described as a new foundation away from its homeland,[51] while Corcyra is presented in both Herodotus and Thucydides very much in light of its colonial relationships, as discussed above.[52] Thucydides explicitly endorses part of this theory; as Hornblower notes, 'at Corcyra, Thucydides explicitly says that the root cause [of *stasis*] is *pleonexia*'.[53] In the Archaeology the historian also argues that rich land leads to *stasis* (1.2.4), adding that Attica's poverty had long protected the place against such crises (1.2.5).[54]

The troubled social ties and the susceptibility to luxury exhibited by Corcyra would thus prompt a reader familiar with the 'natural' results of such characteristics to suspect that the island might be particularly susceptible to *stasis*, and Thucydides does indeed depict civil war there. Two notoriously graphic passages at Corcyra form the historian's only detailed treatment of the widespread phenomenon of *stasis* in the Peloponnesian War (3.70–85, 4.46–8). Money continues to be present in the narrative; Thucydides notes the great wealth from shipping that is incinerated as Corcyraeans burn their own city (3.74.2 χρήματα πολλὰ ἐμπόρων κατεκαύθη). The individualistic avarice that fosters *stasis* also appears again when Thucydides tells, for example, of the Athenian *proxenos* Peithias prosecuting the five wealthiest members of the oligarchic party (3.70.4), or, unusually, of men taking refuge in a sanctuary to escape a fine (3.70.5). While the peak of the *stasis* is depicted largely as an upheaval of violence with no apparent reason, the one explicit motive Thucydides gives for any of the murders is that men hunt down their creditors (3.81.4). The seriousness of the disaster is emphasized when the Corcyraeans try to make a treaty with each other in an attempt to save the city (3.80.1 ὅπως σωθήσεται ἡ πόλις), implying the city's ruin when they fail to achieve this goal.

Thucydides' final statement on Corcyra is that 'the *stasis*, having become great, ended at this point, at any rate as far as concerns this war' (4.48.5 ὅσα γε κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον τόνδε). This oddly forward-looking conclusion can be taken as evidence for various strata in Thucydides' writing or as proof that he once saw his single war as two.[55] But it also suggests the abiding nature of the place, which an ancient reader might expect to give rise to similar difficulties even after the end of the Peloponnesian War. It may also serve as one final echo of Homer, leaving the

once formidable in battle, but τρυφή eventually rendered them soft, a story he takes from Xenophanes (11 B 3 DK; cf. Thgn. 1103). N.H. Demand, *Urban Relocation in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1990), 33 observes the similarities in the stories of the Phaeacians and the Colophonians. Ephorus (*FGrHist* 70 F 183) claims that the Milesians triumphed over the Scythians as long as they avoided τρυφή, a story that allegedly produced the proverb that the Milesians 'were once long ago brave men' (Ar. *Plut*. 1002, 1075; Anac. *PMG* 426; Demon, *FGrHist* 327 F 16; cf. Arist. fr. 557 Rose).

[51] E.g. K.J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte* (Berlin, 1924) 1.231–2 and H. Schaefer, 'Eigenart und Wesenszüge der griechischen Kolonisation', *Heidelberger Jahrbücher* 4 (1960), 77–93, at 77–8. But see Demand (n. 50), 28–9, arguing that the Phaeacian story differs significantly from the normal process of colonization in that the entire community relocated.

[52] Thucydides' emphasis on the colonial relationships of Corcyra is in contrast to his treatment of other cities such as Thebes and Plataea, whose familial relationship goes unmentioned.

[53] Hornblower (n. 32), 173, commenting on Thuc. 3.82.8, πάντων δ' αὐτῶν αἴτιον ἀρχὴ ἡ διὰ πλεονεξίαν καὶ φιλοτιμίαν.

[54] In related examples, Ar. *Ran*. 354–68, Lys. 18.17 and Arist. *Pol*. 1302b5–10 all attribute faction to greed.

[55] A.W. Gomme, A. Andrewes, K.J. Dover, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford, 1981[5]), 411.

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Corcyraeans much as the bard left his Phaeacians, both works' final words on the island looking toward a foreboding and mysterious future.

CONCLUSIONS

As arguments put forward by scholars from antiquity to modern times make clear, Homer's depiction of Phaeacia is sufficiently ambiguous to allow a reader to conclude that something is socially amiss on the island. Such a conclusion might have been particularly appealing to a society convinced that luxury can cause social or moral decay, or to a historian who theorizes that rich cities are prone to *stasis*, regardless of Homer's original intentions. A reading of Phaeacia as a disaster waiting to happen seems to lie behind Thucydides' use of the island, as he reminds the reader of its Phaeacian past, emphasizes its Phaeacia-like riches and the ease with which Corcyraeans can be seduced into treason by comfortable treatment, and then depicts Corcyra as suffering precisely the type of social catastrophe such attributes were thought to cause.

The fact that the island's story follows a trajectory in keeping with a political theory regarding the development and collapse of a particular type of state may account for Thucydides' puzzling use of the place. His work is implicitly premised on the stable nature of humanity, for this brand of war will return, Thucydides claims, as long as human character remains the same (3.82.2 ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾖ). The projected value of the work depends on this expectation: Thucydides claims that his writing will prove useful for those who wish 'to examine the truth of what happened and the sort of thing, or similar, which will happen again sometime, in accordance with the nature of humanity' (1.22.4), much in the same way as it will allow recognition of the plague (2.48.3). Such an agenda depends on patterns of behaviour, by states, individuals or diseases, to render the past predictive of the future. Thucydides' story of Corcyra establishes just such a pattern. His choice to spotlight this particular narrative thus seems due to its status as an ideal *exemplum*; he is not simply offering anecdotal accounts regarding the events of a long-gone conflict, but he is constructing a κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί to show the fate awaiting a particular type of national character.

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